

## “News on and for Social Media”

### Information about instructor:

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Division for Computational Communication Research

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### Information about seminar:

Part of the undergraduate program “Communication studies”

takes place via in-person weekly meetings (Tuesdays, 14:00-18:00, Spring semester 2023)

in room 106, Amalienstrasse 73A

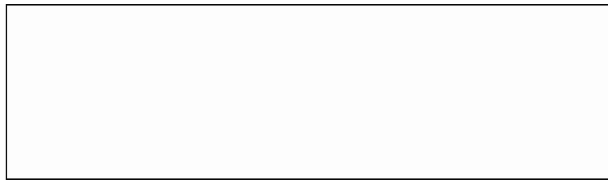
[Link to course in LSF course catalogue](#)

## Summary of Seminar

Facebook, Instagram, Youtube or TikTok - people use a variety of digital platforms to stay informed. In this seminar, we discuss news engagement on social media, i.e., how users like, share, or comment on news on digital platforms.

On a theoretical level, we will deal with concepts such news engagement and popularity cues, that is, how and why audiences engage with news on social media. On a methodological and empirical level, we will conduct our own empirical research project. This includes a quantitative content analysis to analyze how users engage with what type of news, for instance concerning types of engagement (e.g., likes, shares, comments) and types of news users engage with (e.g., news topics, visualizations). The seminar is held in English (planned as an in-person meeting, but we may switch to virtual if needed). Students will have to give a presentation and write a paper on an empirical project they conducted for final assessment.

Important: First, please be aware that this is a quantitative research seminar, meaning you will have to work with and use statistical software (e.g., SPSS, R, based on your preferences). Second, please don't feel anxious about visiting a seminar in English. I am not a native speaker and I assume most students won't be either. See this seminar as a chance to test and improve your English in a constructive environment - something that will prove useful for your future studies and/or the job market.



## Learning Goals

- Students will learn basic knowledge of theories and empirical studies on digital news use, digital news engagement, and related effects.
- Students will be able to conduct their own analyses, either via qualitative interviews or via a manual or automated content analysis of secondary data.
- Students will be able to apply this knowledge to independently conduct a research project on how people engage with news on social media. This means that they formulate research questions/hypotheses, develop a suitable operationalization, conduct descriptive analyses/statistical tests to answer these questions/test hypotheses, and critically interpret results.
- Students will be able to critically discuss current research on the topic of social media and journalism, summarize its strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate it.
- Students will be able to engage in factual and competent discussions. They are able to communicate their acquired knowledge alone and in groups in a comprehensible and structured manner, both orally and in writing. They are also able to work in groups, resolve potential conflicts, and organize themselves.

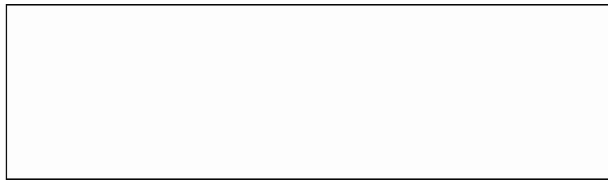
## Workload & Assessment

**This is a 12 ECTS seminar which equals 360 hours of work** (different regulations may apply for incoming students). The final grade is based on three different assessments:

- Assessment 1: A theory-related presentation (20%)
- Assessment 2: A research-related presentation (20%)
- Assessment 3: A term paper (60%)

Please know that the time spent in in-person meetings in class is only a fraction of the actual workload needed to pass the class. The bulk of the required work needs to be done between sessions. The workload includes attendance in seminar sessions, preparing for these via readings and working through tutorials, handing in drafts for your research design and your instrument, collecting and analyzing data for your research project, a theory-related presentation, a research-related presentation, acting as a respondent, and a final seminar paper. Additional, non-graded assessments thus include:

- Acting as a respondent for a theory-related presentation (on May 2nd or May 9th)
- Handing in “Template Research Design” (by May 21st, 2023)
- Handing in “Instrument” (by June 11th, 2023)



### **Assessment 1: Theory-related Presentation**

*Theory-related presentations* include a presentation with slides and a 2-page handout. Presentations are delivered in groups of 3-5 students. They make up **20%** of the final mark. Please talk to the instructor at least one week before your presentation. Your presentation should be centered around the key questions proposed for each presentation (around 15 minutes) and pose one key question for the subsequent discussion (around 5 minutes). It may rely on key references proposed for each presentation but needs to include additional literature. Please send your slides and handout to the instructor before your presentation. You will find information on how these presentations will be graded in the document “*Grading Scheme\_Theory-related Presentations*” on Moodle.

### **Assessment 2: Research-related Presentation**

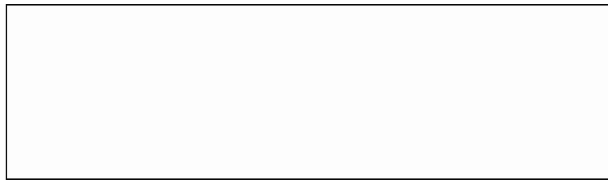
*Research-related presentations* (around 12 minutes) include a presentation with slides (no handout needed!). Presentations are delivered in groups with which you conducted your research projects. They make up **20%** of the final mark. Your presentation should be a short presentation of your research project, similar to a conference presentation (i.e., discuss your main research questions, your methods, and your findings). You do not need to send your slides and handout to the instructor before your presentation. You will find information on how these presentations will be graded in the document “*Grading Scheme\_Research-related Presentations*” on Moodle.

### **Assessment 3: Term Paper**

*Term papers* can be delivered individually (35.000 characters) or in groups (45.000 characters for groups of two, 55.000 characters for groups of three, 65.000 characters for groups of four). This includes everything (i.e., from introduction to references, including blank spaces). It makes up **60%** of the final mark and is due on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (via Moodle). The paper should be formatted according to the following guidelines:

- Times New Roman, 12 pt., double spacing; please use template for the title page (Moodle)
- Please cite according to APA7.
- Please add the affirmation on independent work.

You will find information on how these presentations will be graded in the document “*Grading Scheme\_Term Paper*” on Moodle.



## Topics: Theory-Related Presentations

### Presentation 1: Theoretical Perspectives – News Engagement

Session 3, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### Key questions:

- (1) How can we define “news engagement”?
- (2) What are different “patterns” of audience engagement with news? (e.g., liking, sharing, etc.)
- (3) What do you find helpful about the concept of “news engagement” – and where is it limited?
- (4) Please pose a question for the discussion related to your presentation!

- Costera Meijer, I., & Groot Kormelink, T. (2015). Checking, Sharing, Clicking and Linking: Changing patterns of news use between 2004 and 2014. *Digital Journalism*, 3(5), 664–679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.937149>
- Sang, Y., Lee, J. Y., Park, S., Fisher, C., & Fuller, G. (2020). Signalling and Expressive Interaction: Online News Users’ Different Modes of Interaction on Digital Platforms. *Digital Journalism*, 8(4), 467–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1743194>
- Steensen, S., Ferrer-Conill, R., & Peters, C. (2020). (Against a) Theory of Audience Engagement with News. *Journalism Studies*, 21(12), 1662–1680. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1788414>

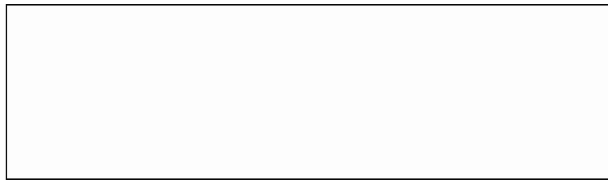
### Presentation 2: Theoretical Perspectives – (News) Media Repertoires

Session 3, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### Key questions:

- (1) How can we define (news) media repertoires?
- (2) Empirically, what do we know about how people use different social media platforms generally and for news?
- (3) What do you find helpful about the concept of “(news) media repertoires” – and where is it limited?
- (4) Please pose a question for the discussion related to your presentation!

- Boczkowski, P. J., Matassi, M., & Mitchelstein, E. (2018). How Young Users Deal With Multiple Platforms: The Role of Meaning-Making in Social Media Repertoires. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(5), 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy012>
- Dvir-Gvirsman, S. (2022). Understanding news engagement on social media: A media repertoire approach. *New Media & Society*, 24(8), 1791–1812. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820961349>
- Peters, C., & Christian Schröder, K. (2018). Beyond the Here and Now of News Audiences: A Process-Based Framework for Investigating News Repertoires. *Journal of Communication*, 68(6), 1079–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy060>



### **Presentation 3: Methodological Perspectives – Semi-Structured Interviews**

*Session 3, May 2<sup>nd</sup>*

#### Key questions:

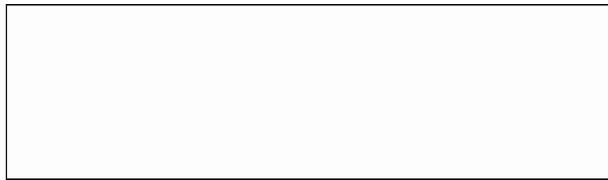
- (1) How do researchers use in-depth interviews to study social media news engagement?
  - (2) What are typical steps in conducting in-depth interviews and analyzing findings?
  - (3) What do you find helpful about using qualitative interviews for studying social media news engagement – and where is this method limited? (e.g., sampling, creation of interview guide, interview, analysis of data)
  - (4) Please pose a question for the discussion related to your presentation!
- Goyanes, M., & Demeter, M. (2022). Beyond positive or negative: Understanding the phenomenology, typologies and impact of incidental news exposure on citizens' daily lives. *New Media & Society*, 24(3), 760–777. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820967679>
  - Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative Interviews. In U. Flick (Hrsg.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526416070>
  - Swart, J. (2023). Tactics of news literacy: How young people access, evaluate, and engage with news on social media. *New Media & Society*, 25(3), 505–521. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211011447>

### **Presentation 4: Methodological Perspectives – Quantitative Manual Content Analysis**

*Session 3, May 2<sup>nd</sup>*

#### Key questions:

- (1) How do researchers use manual quantitative content analyses to study social media news engagement?
  - (2) What are typical steps in conducting a manual quantitative content analysis and analyzing findings? (e.g., sampling, creation of a codebook, coding, reliability testing)
  - (3) What do you find helpful about using quantitative content analyses for studying social media news engagement – and where is this method limited?
  - (4) Please pose a question for the discussion related to your presentation!
- Blassnig, S., Engesser, S., Ernst, N., & Esser, F. (2019). Hitting a Nerve: Populist News Articles Lead to More Frequent and More Populist Reader Comments. *Political Communication*, 36(4), 629–651. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1637980>
  - Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed). SAGE.
  - Tenenboim, O. (2022). Comments, Shares, or Likes: What Makes News Posts Engaging in Different Ways. *Social Media + Society*, 8(4), 205630512211302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221130282>



## Presentation 5: Methodological Perspectives – Data Donations

Session 3, May 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Key questions:

- (1) How do researchers use data donations to study social media news engagement?
- (2) What are typical steps in conducting data donation studies and analyzing findings? (e.g., sampling of users & platforms, download of data by users, upload & anonymization, analysis)
- (3) What do you find helpful about using data donations for studying social media news engagement – and where is this method limited?
- (4) Please pose a question for the discussion related to your presentation!

- Ohme, J., Araujo, T., Boeschoten, L., Freelon, D., Ram, N., Reeves, B. B., & Robinson, T. N. (2023). Digital Trace Data Collection for Social Media Effects Research: APIs, Data Donation, and (Screen) Tracking. *Communication Methods and Measures*. Online first publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2023.2181319>
- Thorson, K., Cotter, K., Medeiros, M., & Pak, C. (2021). Algorithmic inference, political interest, and exposure to news and politics on Facebook. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(2), 183–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1642934>
- van Driel, I. I., Giachanou, A., Pouwels, J. L., Boeschoten, L., Beyens, I., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2022). Promises and Pitfalls of Social Media Data Donations. *Communication Methods and Measures*. Online first publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19312458.2022.2109608>



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## Overview Seminar “News on and For Social Media” (Spring 2023)

Date	Phase	Session	Tasks & Deadlines		
18.04.2023	<b>Introduction: Social Media News Engagement</b>	Session 1: <i>Introduction</i>	Information on the seminar: expectations, structure, and assessment		
25.04.2023		Session 2: <i>Social Media &amp; News</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Input on “Social Media & News”	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Group work on presentations	
02.05.2023		Session 3: <i>Social Media News Engagement – Theories &amp; Methods I</i>		Theory-Related Presentation 1 (News Engagement) Theory-Related Presentation 2 (News Media Repertoires) Theory-Related Presentation 3 (Semi-Structured Interviews) Theory-Related Presentation 4 (Quantitative Manual Content Analysis) Acting as a respondent	
09.05.2023		Session 4: <i>Social Media – Theories &amp; Methods II</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Input on “Research Designs I, II, & III”	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Theory-Related Presentation 5 (Data Donations) Acting as a respondent  Group-Building: Assignment to qualitative, quantitative or computational track	
16.05.2023		<b>Developing Your Research Designs</b>	Session 5: <i>Developing Research Questions &amp; Hypotheses</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Input on “Developing a Research Design”	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Developing group research designs  <b>Deadline:</b> Handing in “Template Research Design” (by May 21st, 2023)
23.05.2023			Session 6: <i>Developing Research Questions &amp; Hypotheses II</i>	Individual feedback on research designs (virtual, no in-person meeting)	



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30.05.2023	Operationalization	Session 7: <i>Data Collection &amp; Operationalization I</i>	Tutorials/input on data collection methods (virtual, no in-person meeting)	
06.06.2023		Session 8: <i>Data Collection &amp; Operationalization II</i>		<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Developing instruments  <b>Deadline:</b> Handing in “Instrument” (by June 11th, 2023)
13.06.2023		Session 9: <i>Data Collection &amp; Operationalization III</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Individual feedback on instruments	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Developing instruments
20.06.2023	Data Collection & Analysis	Session 10: <i>Data Analysis</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Input on “Data Analysis”	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Data collection & analysis
27.06.2023		Session 11: <i>Data Analysis II</i>		<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Data collection & analysis
04.07.2023		Session 12: <i>Data Analysis III</i>		<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Data collection & analysis
11.07.2023	No in-person meeting; Group work on final presentations & virtual office hours			
18.07.2023		Session 14: <i>Mini Conference &amp; Term paper Q&amp;A</i>	<u>Input by instructor:</u> Q&A term paper	<u>Tasks/input by students:</u> Mini-Conference: Research-Related Presentations